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## Editorial

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Welcome to the final issue of the fourth volume of the *Journal of Cetacean Research and Management*. Year 2002 has been another good year for the Journal. A total of 37 papers have been published involving some 114 authors from 21 countries (including from Europe, Africa, Asia, Australasia, North America and South America). I am particularly pleased at the wide geographic spread and range of disciplines included. The published papers illustrate that the *Journal* is fulfilling its aim of improving conservation science in general and in particular the conservation and management of cetaceans throughout the world. An index to Volume 4 appears at the end of this issue.

The present issue again covers a broad range of subjects, areas and species. Three of the papers (two by Reeves *et al.* and one by Kato and Kasuya) show how careful analyses of historical whaling records, whilst fascinating in their own right, can contribute to the determination of the status of present day populations and hence better management. Reeves *et al.* examine issues related to North Atlantic humpback whales in terms of historical catches and distribution, whilst Kato and Kasuya examine similar data for the western North Pacific stock of gray whales, one of the most endangered in the world. Another highly endangered population is the North Pacific right whale – McDonald and Moore present the first good information on calls made from these animals in the eastern Bering Sea. Acoustic data of various kinds are becoming increasingly valuable in conservation related studies.

Photo-identification data form the focus of two papers. Garrigue *et al.* examine the movements of humpback whales throughout the Oceania region of the South Pacific based on collaborative studies. Such work is vital to a better understanding of the stock structure of these animals, an essential component of management and conservation. Calambokidis *et al.* examine the movements of a proposed feeding aggregation of gray whales to try to provide insight on whether they should be managed as a separate management unit from the main western North Pacific gray whale population.

Baird *et al.* look at the potential effect of incidental catches of gray whales on the same population. Whilst such

catches do not pose a threat to this particular population, incidental catches represent the major threat to many cetacean populations around the world. The best way to obtain reliable information on incidental catch numbers is using well-designed independent observer studies. Ferrero *et al.* show how additional valuable data can be obtained from such programmes as they examine small cetacean habitat use in the central North Pacific. In addition to good information on numbers of incidentally caught animals, knowledge of stock structure (and associated population size) is essential to assess the potential impact of such catches. McLellan *et al.* examine long-term strandings information from the eastern USA in the context of current hypotheses of the stock structure of bottlenose dolphins.

Whalewatching is becoming an increasingly popular activity and it is important that it is carefully monitored in order to ensure that any interference does not become a threat to cetacean populations. Williams *et al.* present a study of one particular type of whalewatching practice on male killer whales off British Columbia that may be problematic.

Directed population abundance studies are expensive undertakings and in some areas and countries are not practical for this reason. Pinedo *et al.* examine the potential for platform of opportunity studies to provide abundance and distribution information with reference to studies undertaken off the southern coast of Brazil.

The quality of any Journal is a reflection of the quality and dedication of its reviewers. I would like to thank publicly here all those scientists who dedicate a considerable period of time to offering constructive and valuable criticism and advice on submitted manuscripts. This not only ensures the high quality of published papers but also serves to improve the quality of cetacean management science throughout the world. An updated list of referees can be found on the journal website (<http://www.iwcoffice.org/Publications/reviewers.htm>).

G.P Donovan  
*Editor*